

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES

September 8, 2005

Members Present: Al Byam (Co-Chair), Barbara Sutherland (Co-Chair), Doris Holden (Treasurer), Henry Peirce, Frank Lattuca, Rosemary Kofler, Elsie Fetterman, Susan Whitbourne, Tom McAuley

Absent: None

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Interim Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Program Director/Services), Karen Erman (Management Assistant), Marlene Barnett (Program Coordinator)

Others: Jean Haggerty, Marge Babb

Welcome

Meeting called to order at 9:08 AM. Al Byam, Co- Chair welcomed all members and guests. He also introduced and welcomed newly appointed member, Tom McAuley.

Minutes of Meeting

Minutes of July 14, 2005, were reviewed and accepted as written. There was no meeting in August 2005.

SENIOR TRUST

Treasurer's Report:

Doris Holden reported that there was little activity in the past two months. There was one unspecified donation of \$15.00 and one check written for scholarships. The investments were up a bit in value. The balance in the checking account is \$612.20. The total assets are \$84,103.95. The Treasurer's report was accepted as written.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Andrus Award Outcome:

AARP gives out an annual award to one person in each state. Jean Haggerty was nominated by the Amherst COA, Stavros, the Mass. Senior Action Council, and the Amherst Housing Authority and has been chosen by AARP to receive this prestigious award. The presentation will be on Monday, October 24th, 11:30 AM at the Lord Jeffery Inn in Amherst. Officials came out and met with Nancy and Jean. They were impressed and thankful for nominating Jean. Jean said that it was an honor to be nominated.

Senior Trust/Friends Update:

A meeting was held on August 30th with the representatives of the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, staff and several COA members. They presented the group with a brief description of their services. There are two options within the Foundation to consider:

- Agency Endowed Fund. This would preserve the principal in perpetuity. It involves a permanent transfer of assets to the Foundation and would limit the distributions to 4.5% of the principal annually. The fee for endowed funds is 1% annually.
- Agency Advised Fund. This would allow a group of advisors (like the COA) to be designated to be directly involved and recommend the timing and amount of distributions to the Senior Center. Trusteeship of the assets still must be transferred to the Foundation, but this gives you the flexibility to draw down the principal if needed. The fee for advised funds is 1.25% annually.

Nancy and COA members in attendance were very impressed with the presentation, however, Town Council and the Town Manager were not at the meeting due to other commitments. There are two other options to also consider. They are:

- Turn the Senior Trust account over to the Town Accountant. The money would be invested and earn money but it would no longer be considered a 501(c)3. This could impact our qualifying for some grants.
- Non-COA members develop a "Friends" group. This would be independent from staff members and the COA.

Susan Whitbourne was also impressed with the Community Foundation. She placed calls to a few agencies using their service and found that they were very happy. Tom McAuley was also very impressed with their track record.

Another meeting will be needed which will include Town Counsel, the Finance Director and the Town Manager. A progress report will be made to COA members at the regular October business meeting.

COA By-Law Update:

COA members were given the latest draft of the COA By-Laws. On August 23rd Staff and a few COA members met with Barry DelCastilho, Town Manager, to review the COA By-Laws and bring them into compliance with the Amherst Town Government Act. Nancy asked the COA members to look over the draft for any changes. At the next COA meeting, members will be asked to vote on the revised By-Laws and the revised Article Establishing the COA. Then, the COA revision of the Article Establishing the COA will need to go to Town Meeting for approval.

Boston Post Cane Resolution:

Nancy reported that the Boston Post Cane has been given to the oldest Amherst resident, Kenneth Padelford, who is 102 years old, at a ceremony at Applewood. The ceremony was very well attended. Mr. Padelford received a commemorative pin and a certificate. He is holding onto the cane until a permanent display case can be made. The cane will then be displayed in the Amherst Senior Center, along with a plaque where past and future recipient's names will be engraved as a permanent record. Nancy thanked Marge Babb and Doris Holden for all their work in locating the oldest resident and setting up the ceremony.

NEW BUSINESS

Formula Grant Increase:

Nancy announced that the Massachusetts Department of Elder Affairs Formula Grant has been increased from \$16,192 to \$17,504; an additional \$1,312. This money will continue to be used for personnel costs in FY06.

Caring Community Grant Change:

Maura reported that Title III grant money from Highland Valley Elder Services will continue to be used to support the "Kindred Spirits" support group. This support group is for grandparents and other kin who are the primary caregivers for children. (Note: The Daily Hampshire Gazette wrote an excellent article on the "Kindred Spirits" group and Maura received many calls inquiring about the group and several new members have joined.) This year we have asked for additional money to help support the Senior Center's Caregivers' Support Group in this Title III grant as well.

Maura reported that the Caregivers Support Group will be starting up October 12th on Wednesday evenings at the Bangs Community Center. The support group is for people who are primary caregivers of an elder. It will be facilitated by a very qualified person.

Phone System, Bangs Renovations:

Ray Lemek, Director of Maintenance, explained that there are plans for renovations at the Bangs Center that will impact the main entrance. There has been extensive water damage to the atrium area and exterior wall. The atrium area will be repaired with a new metal roof with three sky lights. There will be minimal impact to the building other than there will be no front entrance stair use. The elevator will be in operation.

Karen Erman explained the town is updating their phone system. Information Systems has announced that:

- September 1st-19th telephone infrastructure will be installed,
- September 15th-19th phones will be distributed, and that
- December 15th is the tentative "go-live" date.

There will be trainings for all staff and volunteers.

STAFF REPORTS

Massachusetts PCA Program:

Seth Diamond of Service Employees International Union 2020 wrote a letter to the COA asking them to support legislation that has been filed. The Union, along with about 70 organizational partners including groups like the Massachusetts Councils on Aging, Mass. Senior Action, the Statewide Independent Living Council and numerous other local and statewide groups has filed legislation and a ballot initiative to address some important issues in the MassHealth PCA program. Many Massachusetts seniors and people with disabilities are able to remain independent by receiving personal care services in their homes. Still, many PCA users have a very difficult time finding and keeping PCAs. This campaign will address these core issues.

Jean Haggerty, who acts as an advisory person to Stavros, stated that seniors and people with disabilities want to stay in place at home. They need competent and good PCAs. Right now the consumer is the employer of their own PCA. There is a need for improvement by unionizing the PCAs and giving them benefits. Legislation would help to make an important change for a good and competent PCA workforce. Jean stated that Stavros has signed on in support of this legislation.

Council members asked several questions:

- Will the Union will have trainings and certify people?
- Will there be CORI checks?
- Will there be better standards?

Jean stated that CORI checks happen currently, but they are not a condition of employment. This legislation will make sure that there are qualified people. Right now salary and benefits are an issue. There are no benefits. This will definitely make a difference in making sure there are standards and certification.

The COA members agreed to be a supporter of this legislation, the PCA Quality Home Care Workforce Council Act, S 139 and H 4005 and will write letters of support to state legislators.

There will be a training on this ballot initiative in Amherst on Thursday, October 6th, 12:00 Noon in the Pole Room at the Bangs Community Center.

Meals-On-Wheels/Home Delivered Meals Drivers:

Maura reported that there was a wonderful article in *The Daily Hampshire Gazette* on the two senior lunch programs we offer through our Senior Center.

- Noon-time lunch (Highland Valley Elder Services - Title III Grant)
- Meals-On-Wheels program (University of Massachusetts).

The article generated a great response to the need for volunteer drivers. However, most of the drivers are delivering meals one day a week because of the cost of gas. Now all of the HVES drivers are getting a stipend for gas and the Meals-On-Wheels Program drivers receive \$.40 a meal. Nancy is worried that one of the HVES routes is a long route which includes the Town of Pelham. The Town gets \$.91 a meal. This money pays for Ferne's salary and any mileage stipend for drivers who request it at \$.31 a mile. Nancy has approached Pelham to see if they could take over the delivery of the Pelham meals, but they have no volunteers and rely on us to deliver.

Maura is working with John Foster, who does the MOW billing, to figure out if the price of the meal should be increased. Right now the price for the MOW is \$4. (\$3.50 goes to the University, \$.40 goes to the driver, and \$.10 goes into the MOW bank account).

Department of Elder Affairs (DEA) Annual Report:

COA members were given a copy of the multi-page annual Department of Elder Affairs report that was completed in August. Compiling all the statistics was very time-consuming for all staff, but the statistics are quite interesting and valuable in Senior Center planning.

Senior Center Annual Report:

COA members were given a copy of the Senior Center annual report to the Town of Amherst. The statistics show that the number of people using the Senior Center and its resources is growing. In particular, the food distribution programs are growing. Nancy invited COA members to come and observe the Wednesday morning bread and produce program. The number of people taking part is growing. People are struggling with the cost of food and many more are coming to the free bread and produce program to supplement their food supplies. We do not deny anyone; however, we have had to limit the amount of food that people can take.

Nancy pointed out to the COA members that one thing that is not reflected on this report is that we have only one social worker, Maura. She not only handles seniors but the younger and disabled who need help. The view of what the Senior Center does is evolving.

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

HVES:

There was no meeting in August.

Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC):

Jean Haggerty agreed to be the COA representative for the CPC. She has attended two meetings. The CPC is gathering information and comments from the community to see what the town wants in a Master Plan and how the town should go about creating one. A forum is scheduled at the Bangs Community Center for Thursday, September 29th at 7:00 PM. At the conclusion of this process, the CPC will have a defined Scope of Services for a

Master Plan, a Request for Proposals that can be put out for bid, and some good price estimates on what costs will be. This will allow the CPC to ask the Fall Town Meeting for some of the money to get started on the actual Master plan by early 2006.

Jean stated that some of the issues brought up are: accessibility, affordable housing, student housing, diversity, and transportation. Any input that the public has is important for the Master Plan.

Transportation:

Al Byam reported on transportation. The Federal Transportation Program was signed this summer. The PVTA is still struggling with the State for increased funding for operation and fuel. They have gone out to bid for van service. They have four bidders and will be holding interviews in two weeks. In the spring, they will be meeting to discuss the budget for the next fiscal year.

Other Business:

Nancy reported that Karen has completed a report of building usage at Bangs, Town Hall and Munson Library. A large part of Karen's work is scheduling meetings at these three buildings. Al questioned whether any of the money that is collected by Karen for the Munson Library can be allocated to the Senior Center. Karen explained that this is not possible as the money goes into the Town's General Fund.

Next Meeting is Thursday, October 6th at 9:00 AM.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 AM.

**Respectfully submitted,
Karen Erman, Management Assistant**